responsible for the gross environmental mismanagement;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the plant is not only hazardous to the human beings around but also is likely to affect the agriculture environment of the place;

(d) if so, what action Government have taken to avert this human tragedy; and

(e) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Caustic Soda Plant is a joint venture of the Government of Bihar and the Birlas. The plant has installed necessary pollution control equipments but the effluents are not within the prescribed standards. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in Writ Petition No. 3727/85 has ordered the industry to comply with the standards by 31.12.1993.

(c) The plant falls under hazardous category and can cause damage to human life and agriculture if adequate pollution control measures are not taken.

(d) The Government have taken the following measures:—

(i) The Bihar State Pollution Control Board has been regularly monitoring the plant.

(ii) The consent has been refused by the Board to operate the unit.

(e) Does not arise.

Invitation to Environment Ministers of Western and Eastern Countries For a Conference

1608. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS to be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that he has invited the Environment Ministers of several Western and Asian countries for a two-day conference in early 1994 on "Unresolved international environmental issues" alongwith representatives of the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP, as reported in the Hindustan Times dated the 26th November, 1993;

(b) if so, how many countries have accepted his invitation so far and whether any Agenda has been finalised for the proposed meeting in India, indicating the venue thereof;

(c) whether any follow-up action taken by India alongwith other concerned countries on the decisions taken at the previous such conferences held in 1992-93 and so far on the need for more improvement of global environmental conditions; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) to (d) Government of India has proposed to organise a meeting of Ministers of the Environment of select developed and developing countries to discuss global environmental issues and to informally review the action taken as a follow-up to the UN Conference on Environment and Development of June 1992. The dates and venue of the conference will be firmed up keeping in view the convenience of the invited ministers.

Reserve Forest Land in Assam

1609. SHRI TARA CHARAN MAJUMDAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total Reserve Forest land in Assam at present;

(b) whether it is a fact that a number of hectares of Reserve Forest land have been occupied by various illegal encroachers in Assam;

(c) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(d) what steps Government have taken to remove illegal encroachment on this land?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) The total extent of Reserved Forest in Assam is 17,92,701 hectares as per the State of Forest Report 1991 of Forest Survey of India.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) As per state of Forest Report 1987 of Forest Survey of India, Forest area of 1,31,196 hectares is under encroachment is Assam.

(d) Govt. have taken following steps to remove illigal encroachments.

(i) State Govts. have been given adequate powers under Indian Forest Act, 1927 to remove illegal encroachment.

(ii) Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (Central) have been empowered to deal with cases of diversion of land for non forestry purposes upto 5 h.a.

(iii) People's participation is encouraged in protection and management of forests.

"गोविन्द वल्लभ पन्त हिमालया पर्यावरण और विकास संस्थान हिमाचल प्रदेश"

1610. **श्री महेश्वर सिंह:** क्या पर्यावरण और वन मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) गोविन्द वल्लभ पंत हिमालया पर्यावरण और विकास संस्थान के हिमाचल प्रदेश के कुल्लु जिले के मौहाल नाम स्थान में निर्माणाधीन भवन की वर्तमान स्थिति क्या है;

(ख) इस पर अब तक कितनी धनराशि खर्च की गई है; और

(ग) निर्माण कार्य कब तक पूर्ण होने की संभावना है?

पर्यावरण और वन मंत्रालय के राज्य मंत्री (श्री कमल नाथ): (क) भवन के नक्शे तैयार कर लिए गए हैं, निर्माण अनुमान तैयार किए जा चुके हैं तथा तैयारी का कार्य चल रहा है।

(ख) अब तक 3.89 लाख रुपए खर्च किए जा चुके हैं।

(ग) लगभग 2 वर्षों के बाद।

Depleting of Forest Reserves in the Country

1611. SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that unless steps are taken to stop the fast depleting forest reserves in India, the country would become a barren wasteland with the largest number of ecological refugees in the next fifteen years; if so, what are the reasons therefor;

(b) whether it is a fact that there would be no less than 350 million ecological refugees among the estimated one billion population in the country by the turn of the century; and

(c) if so, what steps Government have taken to contain this awful predictment with details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) to (c) The State of the Forest Report-1991, published by the Forest Survey of India, has indicated in its third assessment of the forest cover of the country based on visual interpretation of Landsat imagery pertaining to the period 1987-89, that there has been a net increase of 560 sq. kms. in the forest cover of the country as compared to the earlier assessment pertaining to the period 1985-87. The increase registered in the forest cover is on account of regeneration and conservation measures of the Government.

In view of above, it would be incorrect to presume that the country would become a barren wasteland.

Clearance of Irrigation Projects in Maharashtra

1612. DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the number and names of irrigation